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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/01/2017  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [EG](#) [IS](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: EGYPT ALLEGEDLY DEPORTS SUDANESE MIGRANTS RETURNED  
FROM ISRAEL

REF: CAIRO 2937 AND PREVIOUS

Classified by Minister Counselor for Economic and Political  
Affairs William R. Stewart for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[11](#). (SBU) Commenting on Israeli press reports that Egypt had deported five of the 48 mostly-Sudanese Africans whom Israel had returned to Egypt in August, and who had previously illegally entered Israel from the Sinai (reftel), UNHCR/Cairo Spokesperson Abeer Etefa told poloff on October 31 that the GOE was still refusing to give UNHCR access to the group of [148](#). UNHCR's MFA contacts assured Etefa that the 23 Sudanese of the group who are UNHCR-designated asylum-seekers or refugees were unharmed and remained in Egypt. However, he would not confirm or deny that five of the remaining 25 had been deported back to Sudan. Similarly Bassel Taman of the MFA Sudan Office refused to confirm or deny the report to poloff on November 1, saying only that deportation decisions in general are made on a case-by-case basis.

[12](#). (SBU) Etefa said that UNHCR was giving the GOE until Friday, November 2, to allow UNHCR access to the group, and at that point would release a statement criticizing the GOE. At issue, she said, was that because the Sudanese had been in Israel, even if they were not eligible for refugee status beforehand, they may now be in need of protection from being returned to Sudan due to its state of war with Israel.

[13](#). (C) Comment: GOE interlocutors have been saying since July that "we are still deliberating" about what to do regarding African migrants illegally entering Israel. If true, Egyptian officials are laying down a marker that they are willing to deport Sudanese - without refugee or asylum-seeker status - who have broken Egyptian law, even if by entering Israel their status may have changed.

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